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THE LIBRARY AS AN AID TO SCHOOL WORK

IF you visit a school which has no library, you will probably find a student classed in arithmetic, algebra, geometry, bookkeeping, astronomy, and English grammar. Said student may "learn enough arithmetic to keep him from being cheated out of what he's got," but he will never learn the use of good English, and never be mistaken for a scholar.

Aside from the popular demand, the preponderance of mathematics in country schools is due largely to its independence of reference books and library inspiration. Without doubt a vast amount of mental development may be procured from this independent source, as if "by main strength and awkwardness." A tolerable amount of history and geography may be "crammed" from texts without assistance from the library, if the teacher has persistence and can hold the pupil to his task. With little ingenuity and less apparatus, a certain amount of useful information may be gotten from the elementary sciences without even reference books.

But when we come to the languages, and the discriminating use of words and facts which is "the sign and seal of culture," the library is no longer a valuable aid, but an indispensable factor. Without reference books and supplementary reading the work is reduced to a study of dry forms, uninteresting, *per se*, to the normal intellect, and unworthy of a high place in the educational systems.

If there is any truth in Carlyle's statement that the true university of these days is a collection of books, then our schools must prepare students for this great university. To try to educate without a library is to inculcate an egotistic, imaginary independence of books. Where is the pupil to learn to investigate if he has failed to do this before he leaves the fitting school? When is he to learn to value books if he enters college with this habit unformed? To begin at that late date, even if he go to college, is an unwelcome task; and the beginner is encompassed by more difficulties than Cato encountered if he ever learned Greek. The probable result is that he will continue to confine himself to his texts and leave college with a knowledge of few other books. These he will soon put aside and forget. Then all further information is either secondhand or dearly bought by experience.

Such education as this breeds our worst enemies. The opponents of higher education point with exultation at such a graduate, and very pertinently ask, "What good has his education done him?" Even the society girl knows more about standard literature than he. He makes an unfavorable appearance, and acquits himself without honor on all occasions, the more apparently because more is expected of him. He is less successful in business than others who never had his advantages. Latin, Greek, and mathematics no longer pass current in the abstract, and win him honor and high grades. The world of reality demands a practical application of these lofty subjects. Finally, the unfortunate subject of criticism begins to descend from his high pedestal of imaginary superiority, or, unwilling to admit and remedy his deficiency, remains a confirmed ignoramus and a perpetual stumbling block in the way of education. Doubtless he, too, will finally turn against you and reproach you in some faulty Latin or Greek phrase, about the sole remnant of his collegiate attainments. If it be at all permissible to speak thus of the student of the classics who does not read, what shall we say for the student who knows no books save his science texts?

A large collection of books is not essential for a fitting-school library. "Consider," says Emerson, "what you have in the smallest chosen library. A company of the wisest and wittiest men that could be picked out of all civil countries, in a thousand years have set in best order the results of their learning and wisdom.

Only such reference books as the skillful teacher can induce the student to consult with profit are essential. We must have unabridged lexicons, classical and biographical dictionaries, classical and modern atlases, cyclopædias, and such other reference books as we shall have to replace by and by on account of wear.

Next, I would emphasize what I have called supplementary reading (borrowing a term from a publisher's catalogue)—scholarly, but entertaining books along the line of our teaching, involving history, biography, mythology, geography, science, natural history, etc. These books should be adapted to the age and advancement of the pupil; and one who has not tested the matter may be surprised at the almost universal adaptation of such books written for children. The older and wiser brothers and sisters read them "on the sly," the parents enjoy them; often the teacher reads one with pleasure and profit. Such books do not have to be "inflicted upon" the student, and may

be made a chief source of general information without trespassing in the least upon his time.

Then there should by all means be books for more general reading; those which are to entertain and at the same time cultivate a taste for the best literature. The student must acquire the ability to recognize the best books and the habit of reading them. Let us have none here for mere show and to bewilder the mind of the student. We want only the best, and none is best which the students cannot be induced to read. This should be a field for recreation and pleasure largely, where the taste for literature may gradually develop without being forever haunted with the gaunt specter of examination.

The average student will hardly reach the best results without careful guidance and seasonable suggestions. In large libraries the services of a trained librarian are almost indispensable; but in the fitting school the teacher cannot lay all of this responsibility on another. He must know his collection of books as the scientist knows his laboratory, and he must also know what his students are reading. A suggestion, even a passing remark, at the proper place will serve to guide the beginner who does not yet know what to choose. This should not be shirked as a drudgery, and certainly need not be such.

Without a library the student may get the worth of his money, but the teacher has lost his golden opportunity. He has failed to furnish ammunition for the batteries of intelligence which he has planted. He has failed to furnish materials for the elaborate mental machinery which he imagines he has set up. He has failed to point out the never-failing mines and to provide the equipment for reducing the ore. He has not laid the foundation of culture.

Even if it were possible to accomplish as much in education without a library, still the result would be obtained with greater effort and less satisfaction. Without this aid the teacher attains his meager success with far greater outlay of strength and vexation of soul than the most abundant success requires with this aid. A fit illustration is found in the means employed to lift subterranean water to the surface. Man, with various buckets and pumps, raises a limited supply so long as the proper amount of mechanical energy is applied. Nature performs the task in a simpler way. By locating the source above the mouth she creates an inexhaustible and never-failing stream. (I think I need not emphasize the importance of having the source higher than the mouth.)

No influence of the library is more beneficent than that of its uni-

fying power. Our great trouble today is to find time for the languages, mathematics, history, geography, physiology, physics, and the many other sciences and arts which are clamoring for admission into our courses. To have recitations on different subjects alternate is unsatisfactory in the fitting school. A solution is offered by uniting allied branches. Whether this can be done successfully in text-books is a matter for further experiment; but that the library may unite all into one symmetrical whole is a definite fact. History helps geography and *vice versa*; both aid the languages and the languages aid both. Even the sciences and mathematics do not stand entirely aloof.

We can close with no better words than those of Carlyle: "If we think of it, all that a university or final highest school can do for us is still but what the first school began doing—teach us to *read*. We learn to read in various languages, in various sciences; we learn the alphabet and letters of all manner of books. But the place where we are to get knowledge, even theoretic knowledge, is the books themselves.

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